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METHOD FOR CUSTOMIZING A BURIAL VAULT CARAPACE

Claim for Priority

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/447,467 filed February 14, 2003, entitled "METHOD FOR CUSTOMIZING A BURIAL VAULT CARAPACE".

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to a burial vault carapace having a customized decorative external surface. The invention more particularly relates to a method for customizing the top of the carapace.

Summary of the Invention

Disclosed are a decorative carapace for a burial vault and a method for decorating the same. A decorative carapace according to the present invention includes a carapace having a top surface; and a substrate having a decorative graphic, said substrate being attached to said top surface of said carapace. According to one aspect of the invention, the substrate is adhered to said carapace using adhesive.

The substrate according to the present invention may be transparent. Moreover, the decorative graphic may be printed on the substrate. The substrate is formed from a material selected from the group of polyester, polypropylene, polyethylene, vinyl, acetate, acrylic, polystyrene, or polycarbonate.

According to yet another aspect of the invention the substrate is adhered to the carapace using transparent adhesive.

A related embodiment includes a decorative funeral urn having an exterior surface; and a substrate having a decorative graphic, the substrate being attached to the exterior surface of the urn.

According to one aspect of the invention, the substrate is adhered to the urn using adhesive.

The substrate according to the present invention may be transparent. Moreover, the decorative graphic may be printed on the substrate. The substrate is formed from a material selected from the group of polyester, polypropylene, polyethylene, vinyl, acetate, acrylic, polystyrene, or polycarbonate.

According to yet another aspect of the invention the substrate is adhered to the urn using transparent adhesive.

According to the present invention a carapace is customized by cleaning a top surface thereof;

providing a substrate having a decorative graphic image printed on one side and an adhesive layer covered by a backing sheet on an opposite side;

peeling the backing sheet from one end of the substrate;

saturating the adhesive side of the substrate with a soap solution;

inverting the substrate so that the adhesive side is facing the top surface of the carapace and aligning the substrate with the carapace;

placing the substrate in contact with the surface of the carapace;

removing the soap solution entrapped between the carapace and the substrate; and

allowing the adhesive to dry.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The above mentioned and other features and objects of this invention, and the manner of attaining them, will become more apparent and the invention itself will be better understood by reference to the following description of embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1A is an exploded view of the decorative carapace of the present invention;

FIG. 1B-1C show a graphic image printed on the substrate of the present invention;

FIG. 1D is an exploded view showing the optional protective layer, adhesive and backing sheet applied to the substrate of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of the method for applying the substrate to the carapace;

FIG. 3 shows the substrate applied to the carapace of an urn vault; and

FIGs. 4 and 5 shows the substrate applied to an urn.

Detailed Description of the Invention

To date, a lot of attention has been focused on the aesthetic appearance of a funeral casket. Caskets are made from a wide variety of materials with an even wider selection of finishes. However, little attention has been paid to the burial vault. In the U.S. many cemeteries require that the casket be placed within a burial vault to minimize the settling of the topsoil. The lack of attention to the cosmetic (aesthetic) appearance of the burial vault has been due to the fact that the main portion of the vault is concealed from view within the earth by the time the mourners arrive to the graveside. Notably, the body of the vault is typically already placed within the grave before the mourners arrive. During burial the casket is placed in the burial vault, the carapace is placed on top of the vault, and soil is shoveled on top of the carapace. The carapace is typically an unadorned, utilitarian object. The inventors of the present invention have identified a long-felt, unmet need to customize the carapace and enhance its aesthetic qualities.

FIG. 1A shows a first embodiment of the invention in which a decorative substrate 10 is applied to a top exterior surface 20 of carapace 22.

According to the present invention the customization of the carapace 22 is accomplished through the use of a graphic 12 printed onto the substrate which is applied to the exterior surface of the carapace 22. According to a preferred embodiment the graphic 12 is a full sized color graphic image which generally spans the surface of carapace.

FIGs. 1C and 1D show the substrate 10 with a graphic image 12. Although not depicted in the drawings, the use of a color graphic image is preferred.

The substrate 10 of the present invention is relatively large, typically 20-30 inches wide by 70-80 inches long. According to a presently preferred embodiment, graphic image 12 is printed onto the substrate 10. The inventors of the present invention have determined that best results are achieved by using a Scitex Superjet printer manufactured by Aprion Digital Ltd., 14 Hamada St., Herzlia B 46104, Israel. However, any printer capable of printing on a large format substrate is acceptable. For example, good results may be achieved using a Hewlett Packard HP 5500 series printer.

The graphic 12 is printed in onto the substrate 10 which in turn is adhered to the carapace 22. An optional protective layer 23 may be applied to the upper surface of the substrate 10 to protect the graphic image 12 from being soiled.

The substrate 10 is sized to substantially span the entire top surface 20 of the carapace 22. Preferably, the substrate 10 is formed as a single continuous sheet of

material because the presence of seams detracts from the aesthetic quality. The substrate 10 may be formed of a variety of materials including polyester, polypropylene, polyethylene, vinyl, acetate, acrylic, polystyrene, or polycarbonate. According to a preferred embodiment the substrate 10 is formed from a polyester material which is both transparent and flexible. However, the substrate may be formed of a rigid or semi-rigid material. Moreover, an opaque substrate is also acceptable.

As will be appreciated by one of ordinary skill in the art, a wide variety of adhesives may be used to mount the substrate 10 onto the carapace 22. If the substrate 10 is transparent then it is preferable that the adhesive be completely colorless and transparent as well.

According to a preferred embodiment, a thin coating of adhesive 25 is applied to a back surface of the substrate 10 and a non-stick backing sheet 27 is applied to cover the adhesive.

Preferably, the adhesive is applied to the unadorned substrate by the manufacturer of the substrate.

As will be appreciated, the aesthetic appearance of the decorated carapace is of the utmost importance. To prevent air bubbles and the entrapment of foreign articles which would mar the appearance of the graphic image, it is necessary to prepare the surface 20 of the carapace 22 to receive the substrate 10.

FIG. 2 is a flowchart of the process used to attach the substrate 10 to the carapace 22.

Place carapace 22 on a flat, rigid surface as support so that when pressure is applied the carapace does not bend and remove the protective film (not illustrated), if present, from the carapace 22 (step 100).

Clean the top surface 20 of the carapace 22 using a roller (step 102). Clean the roller as needed to remove lint and the like using tack sheets. A tack sheet can be used more than once. Dust particles, which are not removed, will appear as blemishes under the image when it is fully dried.

Spray your fingers with an application solution to prevent leaving finger prints on the substrate and peel the backing sheet 27 from corners 10A and 10B of the substrate 10 (step 104). See FIG. 1. There are numerous commercially available application solutions which provide satisfactory results. One such solution is Rapid Tac application fluid manufactured by Rapid TAC Inc, 186 Combs Drive, Merlin OR 97532. Moreover, Applicant has found that a solution formed by mixing 3 teaspoons "Ultra Dawn" dish soap with 12 oz. distilled water also provides satisfactory results. Hereinafter reference to soap solution should be understood to refer to application fluid.

To assist in separating the substrate 10 from backing sheet 27, tape may be placed on the substrate 10 and on the backing sheet 27 proximate corner 10A. Pull the ends of the tape in opposite directions and the backing sheet 27 should separate easily from the substrate 10.

Gradually remove the backing sheet 27 from the substrate 10 (step 106). This task is more easily accomplished using two people. With one person holding corners

10A and 10B, a second person should peel the backing sheet 27 off of the substrate 10. The substrate 10 should be upside down (adhesive layer 25 facing up) on top of the carapace 22.

Spray (saturate) the adhesive side of the substrate 10 with the soap solution (step 108).

Lift the substrate 10 off of the surface of the carapace 22, and invert the substrate 10 so that the adhesive side 25 is facing the top surface 20 of the carapace 22 (step 110). Once again this task is most easily accomplished using two people. One person should lift the substrate 10 off carapace 22 holding corner 10A and a second person holding corner 10C; saturate the surface 20 of carapace 22 with approximately 2 oz. of soap solution.

To place the substrate 10 on the carapace 22, one person should hold corners 10A and 10B while the other holds corners 10C and 10D in the air.

Align the ends of the substrate 10 with the corresponding ends of the carapace 22 (step 112). The edge of the substrate 10 on side 10A, 10B should be placed approx. 1/16" to 1/8" from the edge of the carapace 22.

Once corners 10A, 10B are aligned with the edge of the carapace 22, have the person who is holding corners 10C and 10D lay their side down on the carapace 22.

Gradually place the substrate 10 in contact with the surface of the carapace (step 114) working lengthwise starting from corners 10C, 10D and ending in corners 10A, 10B.

Remove the soap solution entrapped between the carapace 22 and the substrate 10 using the roller (step 116). Use light roller pressure and start from the center of the substrate and work toward the ends lengthwise. Repeat as needed to remove as much solution as possible using firm roller pressure, being sure to work toward the ends lengthwise from the center of the substrate.

Using a squeegee and beginning in the middle of the carapace (10E, 10F), apply firm pressure to remove entrapped air bubbles and any remaining solution (step 118).

After the squeegee process is complete, use a soft cloth to wipe excess moisture from the top and sides of the carapace 22 (step 120).

Remove the protective film 23, if present, from the substrate 10 and discard.

Clean the top surface of the substrate 22 using ammonia free Windex or the like (step 122).

Allow the adhesive to dry (step 124).

According to a further aspect of the invention, the substrate may be applied to the carapace of a smaller vault (FIG. 3) used to intern an urn containing the remains of the deceased. FIG. 3 depicts the substrate being applied to the top surface 20 of the urn vault 22.

FIGs. 4 and 5 depict a further aspect of the present invention in which the substrate 10 is used to customize the appearance of a burial urn 30.

Urn 30 is customized by selecting a graphic from a library of images, printing the graphic 12 on a substrate 10, and applying the substrate 10 to a surface of the urn 30.

In FIG. 4, the substrate 10 substantially spans a circumference of the urn 30, whereas in FIG. 5 the substrate covers only a portion of the urn 30.

The scope of the invention is not limited to the specific embodiments described herein. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that changes may be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.